

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 6176

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINT, SP

SUBJ: DETENTION OF SPANISH MILITARY OFFICERS

REF: MADRID 5559, 5588, 5704, 5713

SUMMARY: SINCE THE ARREST ON JULY 29 OF 10 YOUNGER SPANISH MILITARY OFFICERS, THE VEIL OF SECRECY WHICH SURROUNDED THE CASES HAS FAILED TO

LIFT SUBSTANTIALLY. APPARENTLY FEW PEOPLE HAVE ACCESS TO ALL THE FACTS

SURROUNDING THIS CASE AND THOSE WHO DO ARE NOT TALKING EXCEPT IN GENERALITIES. SINCE THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST, PUBLIC ATTENTION HAS BEEN DIVERTED TO OTHER ISSUES. DESPITE SOME EARLY RUMORS THAT ADDITIONAL ARRESTS, PERHAPS IN THE BARCELONA AREA, WOULD BE MADE, NONE HAVE MATERIALIZED TO OUR KNOWLEDGE. ALL APPEARANCES INDICATE A CONTINUED
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EFFORT TO KEEP THIS UNIQUE SERIES OF ARRESTS FOR UNAUTHORIZED POLITICAL

ACTIVITY AND THE REACTION TO IT FROM GETTING OUT OF HAND. END SUMMARY.

1. SINCE OUR REPORTS OF THE MIDDLE OF AUGUST (REFTELS), LITTLE NEW HAS OCCURRED WITH RESPECT TO THE ARRESTS OF THE NINE CAPTAINS AND ONE MAJOR ON JULY 29. (ONLY 9 ARRESTS--THE MAJOR AND 8 CAPTAINS--HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY. INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO DAO CONTINUES TO SUPPORT BELIEF THAT A NINTH CAPTAIN HAS BEEN ARRESTED. AN 11TH POTENTIAL ARRESTEE HAS APPARENTLY BEEN OUT OF THE COUNTRY SINCE JULY 29.) THE DEFENDANTS HAVE APPOINTED MILITARY ATTORNEYS AND NEITHER THEY NOR THEIR FAMILIES HAVE YET SOUGHT MUCH PUBLICITY, INDICATING AN INTENTION THUS FAR TO SEEK TO OVERCOME THE EXPECTED FORMAL CHARGE OF PREPARING A SEDITIOUS CONSPIRACY BY PLAYING WITHIN THE RULES OF THE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. THIS COULD CHANGE. TWO WIVES HAVE GRANTED INTERVIEWS TO THE PRESS INDICATING THEIR BELIEF THAT THEIR HUSBANDS, WHILE DEDICATED TO SOCIAL CAUSES, WERE COMPLETELY

LOYAL AND PROFESSIONAL MILITARY OFFICERS. WHILE SOME OF OUR MILITARY SOURCES HAVE TAKEN THE LINE THAT A HARD CORE OF THOSE ARRESTED HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH "COMMUNISTS" (BROADLY DEFINED), OTHERS SUCH AS MAJ. GEN. GUIMERA (ARTILLERY INSPECTOR, ARMY STAFF) HAVE COMMENTED TO US THAT NONE ARE COMMUNISTS OR EVEN CLOSE TO IT. A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF SPECULATION HAS SINGLED OUT MAJOR LUIS OTERO AS HAVING "LEFTIST" OR "MARXIST" VIEWS.

2. NO ANNOUNCEMENT HAS YET BEEN MADE AS TO WHEN THE MILITARY COURT MARTIAL PROCEEDINGS WILL BEGIN. SOME SPANISH PRESS ACCOUNTS HAVE ATTRIBUTED TO "NORMALLY WELL-INFORMED SOURCES" THE BELIEF THAT THE PROCEEDINGS WILL BEGIN IN LATE SEPTEMBER OR EARLY OCTOBER, BUT WE HAVE HEARD THAT THERE MAY BE DELAYS.

3. THERE IS ALSO STILL LITTLE LIGHT THROWN ON THE DEMOCRATIC MILITARY UNION (UMD), TO WHICH THE DETAINEES REPORTEDLY BELONGED AND IN WHOSE NAME A MANIFESTO TO THE FOREIGN PRESS WAS RELEASED EARLY IN AUGUST (MADRID 5704). HOWEVER, THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT SUCH AN ORGANIZATION HAS IN FACT EXISTED, PROBABLY ALWAYS IN A RELATIVELY UNSTRUCTURED WAY. ITS MEMBERSHIP MAY HAVE RISEN TO AS MUCH AS APPROXIMATELY 100-150 OFFICERS, WITH OTHER POTENTIAL MEMBERS. (THE UMD MANIFESTO ITSELF CLAIMED

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A MEMBERSHIP OF CLOSE TO 600. ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE POLITICAL SOURCE SUGGESTS THE MEMBERSHIP WAS CLOSER TO 40.)

4. AT THE TIME OF THE ARRESTS AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER, THERE WERE VARIOUS REPORTS THAT A WIDE CIRCLE OF MILITARY OFFICERS WAS BEING INTERROGATED, PARTICULARLY IN THE BARCELONA AREA. THE UMD MANIFESTO ITSELF IMPLIED THAT THE UMD'S ORIGINS WERE RELATED TO THE GENERAL MILITARY ACADEMY IN THE BARCELONA MILITARY DISTRICT. HOWEVER, WE

HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF NO OTHER ARRESTS NOR OF ANY CONTINUING SYSTEMATIC INTERROGATIONS. AT THE END OF AUGUST, THE 6 MONTHS SENTENCE FOR BREACH OF DISCIPLINE LEVIED LAST FEBRUARY AGAINST THE POLITICALLY ACTIVE MAJOR JULIO BUSQUETS WAS COMPLETED, AND HE WAS RELEASED AND ASSIGNED TO A UNIT IN SALAMANCA WITHOUT FANFARE.

5. WHILE A NUMBER OF THE MORE SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS MAY WELL SUPPORT THESE ARRESTS AND A VIGOROUS PROSECUTION OF THOSE ARRESTED, IN THE NAME OF DEMONSTRATING THAT MILITARY SERVICE AND POLITICS DO NOT MIX IN SPAIN FOR THE RANK AND FILE, OUR IMPRESSION IS THAT THE MORE WIDESPREAD REACTION IN MILITARY CIRCLES, AND CERTAINLY IN CIVILIAN POLITICAL CIRCLES, IS THAT THE ARRESTS AND CHARGES WERE AN OVERREACTION TO THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE OFFICERS. THERE IS STILL LITTLE OR NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE INVOLVED IN SIGNIFICANT COVERT ACTIVITY; ON THE CONTRARY, THE ACTIVITIES OF MOST WERE APPARENTLY KNOWN TO A RATHER WIDE CIRCLE OF THEIR COLLEAGUES. (A CHARGE OF PREPARING A SEDITIOUS CONSPIRACY COULD BE VINDICATED SIMPLY BY PROVING UNAUTHORIZED MEETINGS OF MORE THAN FOUR OFFICERS.)

6. DURING AUGUST IT WAS REPORTED THAT ONE OF THE OFFICERS (MAJOR VALERO) HAD BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH PRINCE JUAN CARLOS. WE HAVE HEARD, MOST RECENTLY FROM THE FRG EMBASSY, THAT THE PRINCE HAS EXPRESSED HIS DISPLEASURE AT THIS CHAIN OF EVENTS. THAT EMBASSY'S SOURCES LEAD IT TO BELIEVE THAT THE SENTENCES IMPOSED WILL NOT BE SEVERE. (FURTHER INFORMATION ON PRINCE'S VIEWS IS CONTAINED SEPTTEL.)

7. WHAT THEN IS INVOLVED HERE? TO SOME EXTENT, THIS INCIDENT AND THE REACTIONS TO IT REFLECT WHAT WE ARE SEEING MORE BROADLY HERE IN SPAIN AS THE COUNTRY MOVES FURTHER INTO A PERIOD OF POLITICAL TRANSITION; THAT IS, AN ONGOING DEBATE BETWEEN THOSE WHO THINK NEW SOLUTIONS MUST BE FOUND TO THE PROBLEMS FACING SPAIN AND THOSE WHO FIND CONTINUING REASSURANCE IN THE FOR THEM SUCCESSFUL PAST
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APPLICATION OF THE POLICIES OF THE FRANCO REGIME.

8. FRANCO HIMSELF, IN A SYMBOLICALLY IMPORTANT SEPTEMBER 2 AUDIENCE GRANTED TO THE SPANISH MILITARY HIGH COMMAND AND THE LOCAL LA CORUNA CHAPTERS OF THE RETIRED OFFICERS AND RETIRED CIVIL WAR RESERVE OFFICERS (POLITICALLY ACTIVE SUPPORTERS OF THE REGIME) SPOKE OF THE DANGERS TO CONTINUITY IN THE FOLLOWING VEIN: "SPAIN IS IN THE MIDDLE OF A WORLD TORMENTED BY DANGERS, INCLUDING LARGER ONES THAN THOSE WHICH THREATENED US IN 1936, OF STRATEGEMS OF A WORKDOWIDE TERRORISM WHICH IS SEEKING TOTAL CONTROL." BUT HE ALSO SPOKE OF PROGRESS AND OF "CONSTANT PERFECTING" OF THE SYSTEM, IN AN ILLUSION TO CHANGE THAT JUAN CARLOS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR HE FOUND SIGNIFICANT.

9. ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE, CONSIDERING THEMSELVES NO LESS

LOYAL OR PROFESSIONAL AS MILITARY OFFICERS, ARE OFFICERS (HOW MANY CANNOT BE ESTIMATED) WHO SEE THE CURRENT SCENE AS THE REFLECTION OF AN APPROACH BY THE REACTIONARY OLD GUARD WHICH PREVENTS THE SPANISH MILITARY FROM ENTERING THE MODERN, DISCIPLINED, EDUCATED AND PROUD RANKS OF THE BEST MILITARY ESTABLISHMENTS OF EUROPE. IN THIS SENSE, THERE CERTAINLY DOES APPEAR TO BE A GENERATION GAP IN THE SPANISH ARMED FORCES, IN THE SAME SENSE THAT THIS EXISTS IN OTHER PARTS OF SPANISH SOCIETY. THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER THE SPANISH MILITARY WILL REMAIN A MAJOR POLITICAL INSTITUTION BUT RATHER WHAT KIND OF AN ARBITER THE SPANISH MILITARY DESIRES TO BE IN A PERIOD OF POLITICAL TRANSITION. WITH OR WITHOUT INCIDENTS SUCH AS THESE ARRESTS, ISSUES OF THIS VARIETY WILL NOT BE EASILY PUT ASIDE IN THE TIME TO COME.

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